

## Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions and Stress Coping Strategies of Late Adolescents

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### Abstract

*Problem Statement:* Adolescence is a stage of major growth and development in terms of significant cognitive, behavioral, psychological, and physiological changes. For adolescents, these developmental changes could be accompanied by stressful situations. Adolescents need to cope with these stressors successfully, yet the developmental period of adolescence involves an increase in interpersonal conflicts and negative emotions. Cognitive distortions play significant roles in exacerbating distress levels and negative conflict behavior. Consequently, the main focus of this study is an investigation into interpersonal cognitive distortions on adolescents' stress coping strategies.

*Purpose of Study:* The aim of this study was to examine stress coping strategies and the interpersonal cognitive distortions of late adolescents. The relations between interpersonal cognitive distortions and stress coping strategies of late adolescents were tested as well.

*Methods:* A total sample of 391 adolescents from public and private universities participated in this study. The descriptive statistical findings regarding the sub dimensions and t-test results indicating the difference between the means of males and females from "Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions" and "Stress coping Strategies with Stressful Experiences" scales were used. After this, findings related to interpersonal cognitive distortions and stress coping strategies were investigated by using path analysis in the research.

*Findings and Results:* Results revealed that adolescents use the strategies of problem solving and seeking social support more than the strategies of self-blame, imagination, and avoidance. Also, it was found that the strongest predictors of interpersonal rejection among stress coping

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strategies are avoidance, self-blame, and seeking social support. In the unrealistic relationship expectation dimension, it can be seen that seeking social support, imagination, and avoidance strategies explain with a moderate effect. The interpersonal misperception dimension can only be explained by the self-blame strategy as a small effect.

*Conclusion and Recommendations:* It was concluded that adolescents have a low level of interpersonal cognitive distortions and use problem solving and seeking social support strategies more than self-blame, imagination, and avoidance strategies. This means that adolescents use effective stress coping strategies and have low level interpersonal cognitive distortions. Another finding was that the strongest predictors of interpersonal rejection among stress coping strategies are avoidance, self-blame, and seeking social support. During the period of adolescence there are many stressful situations, such as future anxiety, career and occupation anxiety, romantic relationships, and the dimension change of relationships with family. Using effective stress coping strategies is important for overcoming stressful situations. Therefore, effective stress coping strategies should be taught to adolescents, especially for overcoming the stress they face in the period of adolescence.

*Keywords:* Interpersonal cognitive distortions, adolescent stress, coping strategies, late adolescents

Adolescence is a transitional period during which a variety of changes occur. Zarrett and Eccles (2006) mentioned that major developmental changes and challenges are seen during the period of adolescence because youths have gained and developed the competencies, attitudes, and values to make a successful transition into adulthood. Erikson (1968) defined the adolescence period as the developmental process in which "identity" is the primary psychosocial crisis. Adolescents begin to separate themselves from their parents, and they feel closer to peers and give importance to peer relationships. According to Seiffge-Krenke (2011), increased autonomy from parents, the development of closeness and intimacy in friendship, and the emergent interest in romantic relationships are the major changes of the adolescent period. In addition, the developmental tasks in adolescence are identity formation, redefinition of parent-child relationships, and strong attachment with a peer group (Vashchenko, Lambidoni, & Brody, 2007). Therefore, Seiffge-Krenke (2011) concluded that involvement in a new relationship exposes the adolescent to additional stress because the inevitable relational challenges raise the need to find a compromise between self and partner wishes while at the same time maintaining other social relationships.

Most adolescents suffer from stressful situations in their everyday lives, such as making more egalitarian relationship with parents and extending their social network with friends and romantic partners (Seiffge-Krenke, Aunola, & Nurmi, 2009). For adolescents, all these interpersonal relationships could be accompanied by

stressful situations. Other stressors for adolescents could be their own identity, such as dissatisfaction about changes in appearance, characteristics, and traits. Moreover, adolescents could have future anxiety about their educational and career goals and expectations from life.

Experiencing stress has an important function in adolescent development. Stress creates an imbalance between individuals and their environment (Seiffge-Krenke, Aunola, & Nurmi, 2009). According to Seiffge-Krenke (2004), stress could represent a significant and extending risk factor for psychopathology, depending on how adolescents deal with it. In some cases, coping with stress can have a major role in how stress impacts an adolescent's adjustment and helps him or her to understand personal strengths and properties (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) describe coping as the cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage psychological stress. Later, Lazarus (1993) defined coping as an active, purposeful process by which an individual responds to stimuli appraised as taxing or exceeding his or her resources. This includes the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive attempts to manage the demands imposed by such stressors.

Generally, researchers are interested in three different coping styles of adolescents. One of them is the active coping style, which is demonstrated by attempts to seek and receive support from others. The second one is the cognitive coping or internal coping style, which is considered as embodying adaptive coping behaviors. The third coping style -emotion focused, avoidant, or withdrawal coping- is characterized by withdrawal from the stressors or the venting of emotions (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995; Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2009; Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2010). Most of the researchers agree that coping is a complex and multidimensional process that includes both the environment and the personality of the individual.

Most of the researchers reported in their research that an increase in interpersonal conflicts, negative emotions, and maladaptive coping patterns has been observed during the developmental period of adolescence (Yikilmaz & Hamamcı, 2011; Hampel & Petermann, 2006; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995). Furthermore, Stackert and Bursik (2003) asserted that empirical research has clearly demonstrated the negative consequences of irrational beliefs for both individual adjustment and relationship success. It was also mentioned that unrealistic expectations and irrational beliefs play significant roles in exacerbating distress levels and negative conflict behavior (Baucom, Epstein, Sayers, & Sher, 1989; Eidelson & Epstein, 1982; Epstein, 1982; Moller & Van Zyl, 1991).

Interpersonal cognitive distortions were defined as highly exaggerated, rigid, illogical, absolutist beliefs about the nature of relationships and about themselves and others in a relationship (Ellis, 2003). Also, interpersonal conflicts in both parents and peer relationships increase during adolescence, with conflict being broadly defined as a state of incompatible behaviors, disagreement, and opposition (Smetana, Yau, Restrepo, & Roeges, 1991; Vashchenko, Lambidoni, & Brody, 2007). Research on adolescence focuses on typical, everyday stressors during adolescence (Seiffge-Krenke, Aunola, & Nurmi, 2009), the relations between characteristics of adolescents'

relationships with family and peers and behavioral problems, and whether this relationship is influenced by risk factors in the person or the environment (Buysse, 1997), gender differences in coping behavior, age-related differences in coping (Kavsek & Seiffge-Krenke, 1996), and coping strategies in male and female students in early, middle, and late adolescence.

In Turkish literature, interpersonal cognitive distortions have been studied in different variables, such as research conducted by Güven and Sevim (2007) to determine the predictors of marital satisfaction in terms of sex, age, and interpersonal cognitive distortions with marital problem solving skills. They found that marital satisfaction is affected by problem solving skills and unrealistic relationship expectations. Kalkan (2012) examined correlations between problematic Internet use and interpersonal cognitive distortions among university students. It was found that interpersonal cognitive distortions are the significant predictor of problematic Internet use. Another study was conducted by Hamamcı and Çoban (2010). They found that interpersonal cognitive distortions were related with adjustment to university among university students. Hamamcı and Duy (2007) investigated the possible associations between loneliness and other psychological constructs such as social skills, dysfunctional attitudes, irrational beliefs, and interpersonal cognitive distortions. They found that cognitive distortions have negative consequences on the experience of loneliness.

In addition, it was said that stress coping strategies were investigated in many research studies. Özen and Aktan (2010) examined the role of parental attachment style of adolescence in the exposure to bullying and sought to explicate the intermediary role of the coping strategies in this relation. Keskin and Orgun (2006) compared the students' coping strategies and self-efficacy. They found a positive correlation between coping strategies and self-efficacy. Temel, Bahar, and Çuhadar (2007) examined the relation between depression and stress coping strategies of students. Stress coping strategies and interpersonal cognitive distortions were examined by the researchers in many ways in Turkish literature, too. In other words, for adolescents' stressors and coping, lots of related factors including gender, age, types of stressful events like interpersonal or intrapersonal, coping styles, and the relationship between stress and coping have been investigated in detail in the research. However, no study on the relationship between interpersonal cognitive distortions and coping strategies for stressful experiences of late adolescents has been encountered in the related literature. However, Persike and Seiffge-Krenke (2011) mentioned that there is increasing interest in the coping behaviors of youths from different cultures, although little is known about their perception of stressful events and the situations in their lives. Therefore, this particular study is expected to contribute to the literature in this respect by focusing on Turkish adolescents.

In this study, the aim is to determine the stress coping strategies and interpersonal cognitive distortions of adolescents. According to cognitive behavioral therapy, the individual's ways of thinking as well as the content of their thoughts exert a deep influence on their adjustment within a relationship. Stackert and Bursik (2003) emphasized that irrational thinking leads to self-defeating behavior and thus

was seen to affect poorer adjustment. According to Lazarus, cognitive processes are used in stress coping strategies. It is assumed that the adolescents with low interpersonal cognitive distortions use effective stress coping strategies. In order to test this hypothesis, a path analysis was run, and a model was created to determine the relations between stress coping strategies and interpersonal cognitive distortions. Also, gender differences were examined in terms of coping strategies and interpersonal cognitive distortions to see the differences between male and female students.

## Method

### *Participants*

The participants were 391 undergraduate students (109 males, 282 females) who were randomly selected from various departments of public and private universities. The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 25 years. The mean age of the participants was 22.36 years (SD = 1.57).

### *Research Instruments*

***Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions Scale (ICDS).*** The ICDS was developed by Hamamcı and Büyüköztürk (2004) to measure dysfunctional beliefs related to interpersonal relationships. The scale consists of the following three subscales with 19 items: Interpersonal Rejection (8 items), Unrealistic Relationship Expectation (8 items), and Interpersonal Misperception (3 items). It is a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). ICDS scores range from 19 to 95. A higher score indicates greater adherence to dysfunctional relationship beliefs. Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient is .67 for the total scale. For the Interpersonal Rejection subscale, the Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient is .73; for the Unrealistic Relationship Expectation subscale, it is .66; and for the Interpersonal Misperception subscale, it was calculated as .43. The correlation coefficients measured for a randomly split sample ranged from .56 to .73 for the three subscales. The test-retest coefficient in 15 days was .74. Convergent validity was obtained with correlations among the ICDS subscales and the Turkish versions of the Automatic Thoughts Scale ( $r = .54$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the Irrational Belief Scale ( $r = -.54$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Construct validity was obtained with correlations with the Conflict Tendency Scale ( $r = .53$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

***Coping Strategies with Stressful Experiences Scale (CSSES):*** The CSSES (Aysan, 1988) was developed by using the Ways of Coping Checklist (WCCL) based on Lazarus' transactional model of stress (Lazarus & Folkman 1984). The CSSES consists of 45 items assessing the behaviors displayed in potential stress experiences in different areas. There are 5 independent subscales of the CSSES: problem solving (9 items), seeking social support (9 items), self blame (9 items), imagination (9 items), and avoidance (9 items). It is a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all appropriate) to 5 (completely appropriate). The scale assesses the cognitive expectations that direct the emotions and behaviors of an individual. There is no total score for the scale. Each subscale was calculated separately. A higher score in the problem solving and seeking social support subscales indicates that the individual

can control the undesirable effects of stress and the individual copes actively. In addition, a higher score in the self blame, imagination, and avoidance subscales shows that the individual uses ineffective cognitive efforts to cope.

The CSSES was found to be internally consistent in each subscale. Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient is .85 for problem solving subscale. For the seeking social support subscale, Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient is .72, for the self blame subscale it is .70, for the imagination subscale it is .74 and lastly for the avoidance subscale Cronbach alpha is calculated as .70.

#### *Procedure*

The participants all volunteered to participate in the study in 2010. In their regular class time, the questionnaires and a demographic information sheet were given to the students by the researcher and their participation was requested. The researcher made all explanations about the questionnaires. Participants completed the questionnaires in approximately 30 min.

## **Results**

In this section, the descriptive statistical findings regarding the sub dimensions and the t-test results indicating the difference between the means of males and females from “*Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions*” and “*Stress Coping Strategies with Stressful Experiences*” scales are given, respectively. After that, findings related with interpersonal cognitive distortions and the stress coping strategies of late adolescents were investigated by using path analysis in the research.

**Table 1**

*Mean and Standard Deviation of Dimensions of Two Scales*

<i><b>Coping Strategies with Stressful Experiences Scale Dimensions</b></i>	<i><b>M</b></i>	<i><b>SD</b></i>
Problem Solving	31.8082	5.35475
Social Support Seeking	32.7519	5.62707
Self-Blame	24.4271	5.87120
Imagination	25.5192	6.46244
Avoidance	24.4783	5.67395
<i><b>Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions Scale Dimensions</b></i>	<i><b>M</b></i>	<i><b>SD</b></i>
Interpersonal Rejection	17.9003	5.28983
Unrealistic Relationship Expectation	23.5448	5.26502
Interpersonal Misperception	9.6343	2.61882

As seen in Table 1, the mean scores were calculated to determine the stress coping strategies and interpersonal cognitive distortions of adolescents. It was mentioned before that a higher score indicates greater adherence to interpersonal cognitive distortions and coping strategies. The average in the problem solving dimension is found to be 31.81 (SD = 5.35), while the average in the seeking social support dimension is found to be  $M = 32.75$  (SD= 5.63). The average of adolescents in the self-blame dimension is calculated as 24, 43 (SD=5.87), while the average in the imagination dimension is calculated as 25.52 (SD= 6.46) and the average in the avoidance dimension is found to be 24.48 (SD=5.67). The adolescents' means from the three dimensions of cognitive distortions related with relationships are as follows: Interpersonal rejection ( $M=17.90$ ; SD=5.29), unrealistic relationship expectation ( $M=23.54$ ; SD= 5.26), and interpersonal misperception ( $M=9.63$ ; SD= 2.62).

**Table 2**

*Mean, Standard Deviation and T-Test Results of Adolescents in Terms of Gender*

<i>Coping Strategies with Stressful Experiences Scale Dimensions</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>
Problem Solving	male	109	30.9358	5.28848	-2.011
	female	282	32.1454	5.35137	
Seeking Social Support	male	109	30.5229	6.21318	-4.618*
	female	282	33.6135	5.14172	
Self-Blame	male	109	24.9450	6.68031	.998*
	female	282	24.2270	5.52686	
Imagination	male	109	24.9817	6.44777	-1.023
	female	282	25.7270	6.46754	
Avoidance	male	109	25.0183	5.91292	1.171
	female	282	24.2695	5.57559	
<i>Interpersonnel Cognitive Distorsions Scale Dimensions</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>
Interpersonal Rejection	male	109	18.5780	4.91086	1.578
	female	282	17.6383	5.41486	
Unrealistic Relationship Expectation	male	109	23.7890	4.65290	.613*
	female	282	23.4504	5.48820	
Interpersonal Misperception	male	109	9.7523	2.64979	.554
	female	282	9.5887	2.61006	

\* $p < .05$

In Table 2, the t-test results indicated that the seeking social support [ $t = -4.618$ ;  $p < .05$ ] and self-blame [ $t = .998$ ;  $p < .05$ ] dimensions showed significant differences between males and females. The mean score for females in seeking social support is found to be ( $M=33.61$ ;  $SD= 5.14$ ), while it is ( $M= 30.52$ ;  $SD = 6.21$ ) for males. Females received a higher number of social support seeking points than males. In the dimension of self-blame, although the difference is very little, it can be seen that the males' mean scores ( $M= 24.95$ ;  $SD = 6.68$ ) are higher than females ( $M= 24.23$ ;  $SD = 5.53$ ). Looking at the data obtained related with cognitive distortions, a significant difference is found between males and females in the unrealistic relationship expectation dimension [ $t = .613$ ;  $p < .05$ ]. Here, the points of males ( $M= 23.79$ ;  $SD = 4.65$ ) are higher than females. ( $M= 23.45$ ;  $SD = 5.59$ ).

In this section, initially the zero order correlations between variables and then the findings related with standardized coefficients representing the relations between models and variables are introduced. Secondly, findings related with model wellness compatibility and findings related with the evaluation of the model are given. The correlations between variables are shown in table 3.

**Table 3**  
*Zero-Order Correlations Between Variables*

Dimensions	Problem Solving	Social Support Seeking	Self -Blame	Imagination	Avoidance	Interpersonal Rejection	Unrealistic Relationship Expectation	Interpersonal Misperception
Problem Solving	1	.355(**)	.224(**)	-.018	-.305(**)	-.123(*)	.004	.060
Social Support Seeking		1	-.002	.200(**)	-.061	-.138(**)	.171(**)	.068
Self-Blame			1	.575(**)	.578(**)	.391(**)	.164(**)	-.050
Imagination				1	.510(**)	.345(**)	.280(**)	.037
Avoidance					1	.370(**)	.220(**)	-.010
Interpersonal Rejection						1	.251(**)	.187(**)
Unrealistic Relationship Expectation							1	.234(**)
Interpersonal Misperception								1

\*  $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

As seen in table 3, a significant negative relation is calculated between problem solving and interpersonal rejection ( $r = -.123$ ). While a significant inverse relation is



found between seeking social support and interpersonal rejection ( $r = -.138$ ), a positive relation is found between seeking social support and unrealistic relationship expectation ( $r = .171$ ). A positive relation is determined between the dimensions of self-blame and interpersonal rejection ( $r = .391$ ) and unrealistic relationship expectation ( $r = .164$ ). A positive correlation exists between the dimensions of imagination and interpersonal rejection ( $r = .345$ ) and unrealistic relationship expectation ( $r = .280$ ). In addition, a significant correlation is observed between the avoidance dimension and the interpersonal rejection ( $r = .370$ ) and unrealistic relationship expectation ( $r = .220$ ) dimensions.

In designing the model, the compliance statistics and modification indexes of the model were examined without setting any limit or connection. When these values were examined, although the compliance indexes such as CFI, IFI, and NNFI were within acceptable values,  $\chi^2/\text{sd}$  ratio being more than 5/1 and RMSEA value being not smaller than 0.08, modification was needed by checking the compliance indexes.

After necessary modifications were made, the new values were obtained, and these are shown in table 4. Although the compliance values of the model are not in perfect compliance, they are at an acceptable level. The compliance wellness values of structures forming the model (overcoming stress and cognitive distortions) are  $\text{sd} = 10$ ,  $\chi^2=27.98$  ( $p=0.00$ ),  $\text{SRMR}=0.042$ ,  $\text{RMSEA}=0.068$ ,  $\text{GFI}= 0.98$ ,  $\text{AGFI}=0.94$ ,  $\text{CFI}=0.98$ ,  $\text{NNFI}=0.93$ ,  $\text{IFI}= 0.98$ . These values show that the compliance level of the measurement model is acceptable (Kline, 2005). The standardized resolution methods regarding each parameter are shown in figure 1. The general compliance coefficients of the model are shown in table 4.

**Table 4.**

*General Compliance Coefficients Regarding Post-Hoc Model Changes*

<i>Wellness index</i>	<i>compliance</i>	<i>Perfect compliance</i>	<i>Acceptable compliance</i>	<i>Observed value in the model</i>
chi (27.98/10)	square/df*	$\chi^2/\text{d} < 3$	$3 < \chi^2/\text{d} < 5$	2.79
RMSEA		$0 < \text{RMSEA} < 0.05$	$0.05 < \text{RMSEA} < 0.08$	0.068
NNFI		$0.97 \leq \text{NNFI} \leq 1$	$0.95 < \text{NNFI} < 0.97$	0.93
CFI		$0.97 \leq \text{CFI} \leq 1$	$0.95 < \text{CFI} < 0.97$	0.98
GFI		$0.95 \leq \text{GFI} \leq 1$	$0.90 < \text{GFI} < 0.95$	0.98
SRMR		$0 \leq \text{S-RMR} \leq 0.05$	$0.05 < \text{S-RMR} < 0.1$	0.042
AGFI		$0.90 \leq \text{AGFI} \leq 1$	$0.85 < \text{AGFI} < 0.90$	0.94
IFI		$0.95 \leq \text{IFI} \leq 1$	$0.90 < \text{IFI} < 0.95$	0.98

\*  $p < .01$

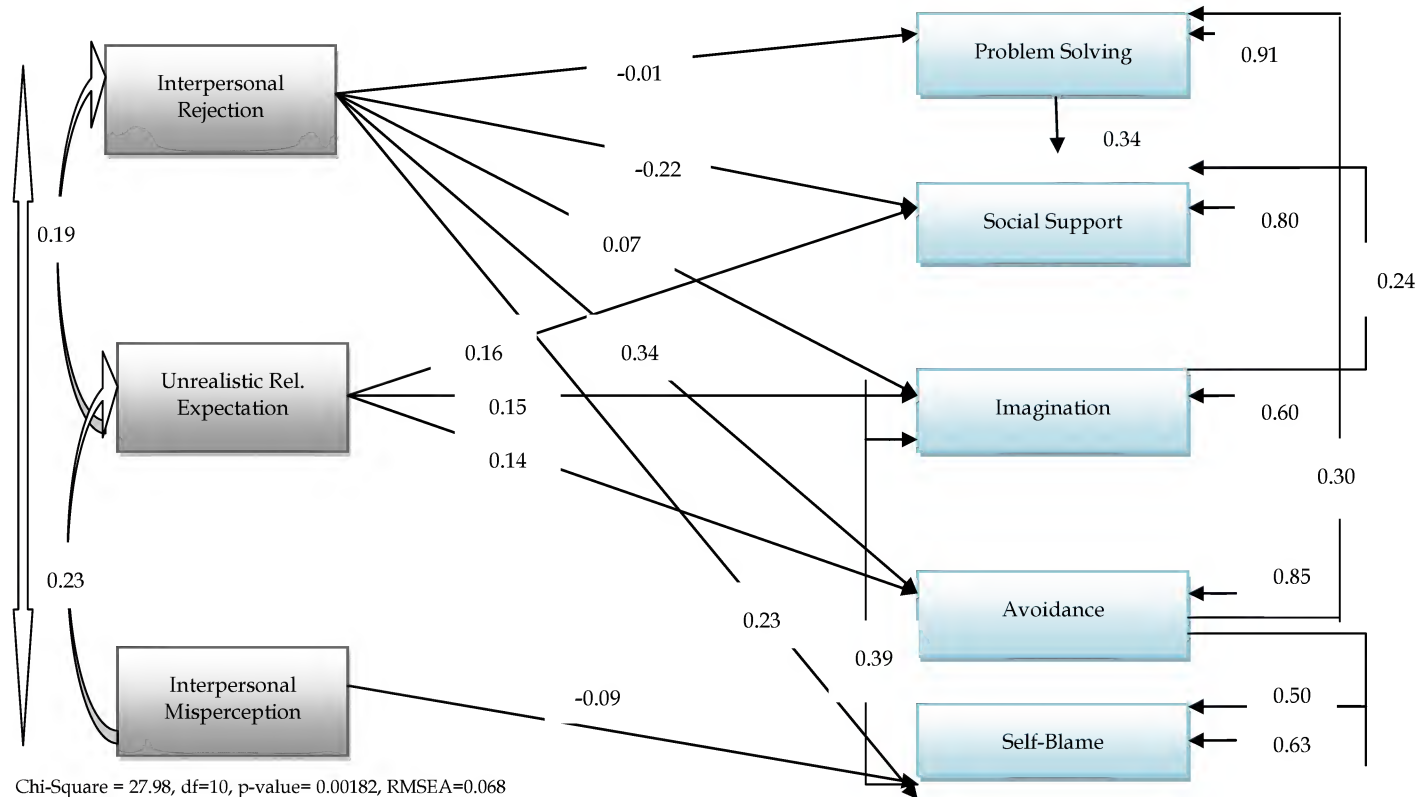


Figure 1. Model of interpersonal cognitive distortions and stress coping strategies

Path model standardized coefficients are used while describing the effects of predictor variables and cognitive distortions to explain coping with stress. If the standardized path coefficients are lower than .10, they are described as small, if lower than .30, they are described as medium, and if higher than .50, they are described as high effect (Kline, 2005). As seen in figure 1, the standardized path model coefficients expressing the relations between dependent and independent variables of the research vary between .01 and .34 ( $p < .01$ ). Therefore, the strongest predictors of interpersonal rejection are avoidance (standardized coefficient = .34), self-blaming (standardized coefficient = .23), and seeking social support (standardized coefficient = -.22). In other words, an adolescent with interpersonal rejection uses avoidance and self-blaming among stress coping strategies rather than seeking social support. As interpersonal rejection increases, the usage of avoidance and self-blaming strategies increase and seeking social support decreases. Other predictors of interpersonal rejection related with cognitive distortions are imagination (standardized coefficient = .07) and problem solving (standardized coefficient = -.01).

The stress coping dimensions related with unrealistic relation expectancy are seeking social support (standardized coefficient = .16), imagination (standardized coefficient = .15), and avoidance (standardized coefficient = .14). It is understood that individuals use seeking social support, imagination, and avoidance strategies in stress coping. Finally, the variable predicted by interpersonal misperception, which is the last dimension of interpersonal cognitive distortions, is self-blaming (Standardized coefficient = -.09). It can be said that individuals with a high score in the interpersonal misperception dimension use a self-blaming strategy for stress coping.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

In the present study, the aim was to examine the relations between the interpersonal cognitive distortions and coping strategies of late adolescents. Although the role of various interpersonal cognitive distortions and coping strategies with stressful experiences subscales has been investigated separately in the literature, the relationship between the two has not yet been investigated. Thus, in this study, there was an attempt to reveal adolescents' interpersonal cognitive distortions and coping strategies during stressful experiences, to measure the differences between males and females in terms of these two factors, and lastly, to find out the relationship between the two variables.

The results show that adolescents have the highest score in the seeking social support and problem solving subscales of the Coping Strategies with Stressful Experiences scale. It means that adolescents use problem solving and seeking social support strategies more than self-blame, imagination, and avoidance strategies. This means that adolescents use effective coping strategies more than ineffective strategies. This finding is consistent with Gelhaar et al.'s (2007) study. They found that the coping behavior of adolescents from seven European countries was

significantly more functional than dysfunctional. In other words, in all investigated cultures, the proportion of the two functional coping styles was higher than dysfunctional coping. However, it cannot be said that adolescents completely use effective coping strategies; in this study, the mean scores showed that they also use ineffective coping strategies like self-blame, imagination, and avoidance. Lazarus (1993) focused on two opposite approaches to coping. One of them is personality characteristics, and the other is the coping process which incorporates efforts to deal with stress that change over time and are shaped by the adaptational context out of which it is generated. This result that comes out at the end of this study shows that stress coping strategies are different for every individual. Personalities, environment, and effort influence strategies for stress coping, so it was thought that adolescents may use different stress coping strategies in different time and situations. The findings of this study are also parallel with this consideration.

Furthermore, it can be seen that the seeking social support and problem solving, which are effective stress coping strategies, are higher than average, and the means they received on the cognitive distortions scale are lower or slightly higher than the average mean score. According to this result, adolescents mostly use effective stress coping strategies, and their interpersonal cognitive distortions are lower. On the other hand, if the adolescents using effective stress coping strategies have low levels of interpersonal cognitive distortions, this will support the hypothesis of this study. This means that the interpersonal cognitive distortions of adolescents using effective stress coping strategies will be low. Stackert and Bursik (2003) conducted a research study to examine how individual differences in adult attachment style were associated with irrational beliefs in the context of young adult romantic relationships. They found that participants who described themselves as having either an anxious-ambivalent or an avoidant adult attachment style endorsed significantly more relationship-specific irrational beliefs than those with a secure adult attachment style. It seems natural that individuals who have low cognitive distortions about relationships use more effective strategies in coping with stressful experiences.

The finding on differences between male and female's interpersonal cognitive distortions and strategies with stressful experiences showed that there is a significant difference between male and female adolescents' mean scores in terms of seeking social support and self-blame strategies. Females use the seeking social support strategy more than male adolescents, while males use self-blame strategies more than female adolescents. The findings of this study were supported by some research studies. Compas, Connor-Smith, Satzman, Harding-Thomsen, & Wadsworth (2001) found that females showed higher levels of active coping and seeking social support than males. Moreover, Gelhaar et al.'s (2007) study of cross cultural research showed that female adolescents have tended to cope more actively with their problems. In addition, Türküm (2002) found that female students use seeking social support coping strategies more than male students. It can be said about this result that males culturally tend to keep their problems to themselves, and they thought that seeking social support could imply weaknesses.

In terms of the interpersonal cognitive distortions, there is a significant mean difference between male and females' unrealistic relationship expectation subscale. The male's mean score is higher than the female's mean score in this subscale. Türküm, Balkaya, and Karaca (2005) found that females who are high school students have more irrational beliefs than male high school students.

Lastly, it was found that the strongest predictor of interpersonal rejection among stress coping strategies is avoidance, self blame, and seeking social support. However, as interpersonal rejection increases, avoidance and self-blame used as stress coping strategies increase and seeking social support decreases. Although they have little effect, imagination and problem solving are seen as two other variables explaining the interpersonal rejection dimension. In the unrealistic relationship expectation dimension, it can be seen that seeking social support, imagination, and avoidance strategies explain with a moderate effect. The interpersonal misperception dimension can only be explained by self-blame strategy as a small effect. In literature, according to some researchers, there is no consistency in stress coping strategies used by individuals. Depending on the property and structure of the stressful situation, the selected stress coping strategies and their effectiveness show variety (Compas, Malcarne, & Fondacaro, 1988; Lazarus & DeLongis, 1983). Generally, Compas, Forsythe and Wagner (1988) mentioned that most individuals systematically vary their coping efforts and choices to fit a given stressor. According to DeLongis and Holtzman (2005), an individual may have engaged in moderately high levels of a given coping strategy over time but do not use this strategy at all when coping with a given type of stressor.

In the adolescence period, there are many stressful situations faced by the individual. Future anxiety, job and occupation anxiety, romantic relationships, and changes in family relationships can be sources of stress for adolescents. Using effective stress coping strategies is important for overcoming stressful relationship situations. Otherwise the adolescent may enter a path that includes alcohol, drugs, and crime. In this context, effective stress coping strategies should be taught to adolescents especially for overcoming the stress they face in the adolescence period. In cognitive therapy, cognitive processes have an effect on our thought and belief systems, and irrational or dysfunctional beliefs affect our thoughts and our evaluation regarding relations. In this context, it is important to create a rational thought system and a positive belief system regarding relations. Also, in order to reach adolescents, education programs should be prepared by universities and public services where positive and rationalistic thinking skills will be redounded.

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## Geç Ergenlerin İlişkilerle İlgili Bilişsel Çarpıtmaları ve Stresle Baş Etme Stratejileri

### Atıf:

Coban, E. A. (2013). Interpersonal cognitive distortions and stress coping strategies of late adolescents. *Eğitim Araştırmaları-Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 51, 65-84.

### (Özet)

#### *Problem Durumu*

Ergenlik dönemi bir geçiş dönemidir ve bu dönemde fiziksel, duygusal, sosyal birçok değişiklik olmaktadır. Yaşanan bu gelişimsel değişimler ergenler üzerinde stres kaynağı oluşturmaktadır. Gelecek kaygısı, akademik ve iş ya da kariyer kaygıları ve ilişkilerle ilgili kaygılarda eklendiğinde stres kaçınılmaz hale gelmektedir. Ergenlerin yaşadıkları bu stres ile başarılı bir şekilde baş etmeleri gerekmektedir. Etkili şekilde baş edemeyen ergenlerin depresyon, kaygı bozuklukları, bağımlılık gibi çeşitli sorunlar yaşaması kaçınılmaz olmaktadır. Ergenlik döneminde ilişkiler, özellikle romantik ilişkiler, anne ve baba ile olan ilişkiler önem kazanmaktadır. İlişkilerde yaşanan olumsuzlukların bir nedeni de kişinin ilişkilerle ilgili sahip olduğu bilişsel çarpıtmaları olabilmektedir. Örneğin, bireyin gerçekçi olmayan ilişki beklentisi, yakınlık kurmaktan kaçınma ve karşısındaki kişilerin zihinlerini okuduğunu sanarak yanlış çıkarımlarda bulunma gibi sahip olduğu akılcı olmayan inançları da stresin önemli kaynaklarından olmaktadır. Sonuç olarak bu çalışmada, ergenlerin ilişkilerle ilgili bilişsel çarpıtmaları ve stresle baş etmede kullandıkları stratejiler üzerine odaklanılmıştır.

#### *Araştırmanın Amacı*

Bu çalışma da ergenlerin bilişsel çarpıtmalarla ilgili inançları ve stresle baş etme stratejileri üzerine odaklanılmıştır. Bu amaçla, öncelikle ergenlerin stresle baş etmede hangi stratejileri daha fazla kullandığı ve ilişkilerle ilgili bilişsel çarpıtma düzeylerinin ne olduğu tespit edilmeye çalışılmıştır. Daha sonra ergenlerin ilişkilerle ilgili bilişsel çarpıtmaları ve stresle baş etme stratejileri arasındaki ilişkiye bakılmıştır.

#### *Yöntem*

Çalışmaya farklı üniversitelerde okuyan 391 kişi gönüllü olarak katılmıştır. "İlişkilerle İlgili Bilişsel Çarpıtmalar Ölçeği" ve "Stres Yaşantılarında Kullanılan Başa Çıkma Stratejileri Ölçeği" veri toplamak amacı ile ergenlere verilmiş ve elde edilen veriler analiz edilerek değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırmaya katılan ergenlerin ilişkilerle ilgili bilişsel çarpıtmalarının düzeyini belirlemek ve stres yaşantılarında hangi baş etme stratejilerini daha fazla kullandıklarını tespit etmek amacı ile betimsel istatistikten yararlanılmıştır. Erkek ve kadınlar arasındaki fark ise t-testi kullanılarak

tespit edilmiştir. Daha sonra ergenlerin bilişsel çarpıtmaları ile stresle baş etme stratejileri arasındaki ilişki path analizi ile test edilmiştir.

#### *Bulgular*

Ergenlerin ilişkilerle ilgili bilişsel çarpıtmaları ve stresle baş etme stratejilerinin ortalamaları hesaplanmıştır. Elde edilen sonuçlar, ergenlerin stresli yaşam deneyimleriyle baş etme stratejileri olarak sırası ile en çok sosyal destek arama, problem çözme, hayal kurma, kaçınma ve kendini suçlamayı kullandıkları tespit edilmiştir. Ergenlerin ilişkilerle ilgili bilişsel çarpıtmaları ölçeğinin üç boyutundan aldıkları puan ortalamaları ise şu şekildedir; yakınlıktan kaçınma ( $M=17,90$ ;  $SD=5,29$ ), gerçekçi olmayan ilişki beklentisi ( $M=23,54$ ;  $SD= 5,26$ ) ve zihin okuma ( $M=9,63$ ;  $SD= 2,62$ ). Ergenlerin cinsiyetlerine göre stres ile baş etme stratejileri ve bilişsel çarpıtmalarla ilgili aldıkları puanlarda anlamlı bir farklılığın olup olmadığını test etmek için yapılan t-testi sonuçlarına göre, baş etme stratejileri ile ilgili olan sosyal destek arama ve kendini suçlama boyutlarında kadınlar ile erkekler arasında anlamlı bir farklılığın olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Kadınların sosyal destek arama puanları erkeklerinkine göre daha yüksektir. Kendini suçlama boyutunda erkeklerin ortalama puanlarının kadınlara göre yüksek olduğu görülmektedir. İlişkilerle ilgili bilişsel çarpıtmalar ile ilgili elde edilen verilere bakıldığında, gerçekçi olmayan ilişki beklentisi boyutunda kadınlar ve erkekler arasında anlamlı bir farklılık bulunmuştur. Erkeklerin puanları kadınların puanlarına göre yüksektir. Ergenlerin ilişkilerle ilgili bilişsel çarpıtmaları ve stresle baş etme stratejileri arasındaki ilişki path analizi ile tespit edilmiştir. Elde edilen sonuçlara göre yakınlıktan kaçınmanın en güçlü yordayıcısı stresle baş etme stratejilerinden kaçınma, kendini suçlama ve sosyal destek aramadır. Bilişsel çarpıtmalarla ilgili yakınlıktan kaçınmanın diğer yordayıcıları ise hayal etme ve problem çözmedir. Modeldeki gerçekçi olmayan ilişki beklentisinin yordadığı stresle baş etme boyutları ise, sosyal destek arama, hayal etme ve kaçınmadır. Son olarak bilişsel çarpıtmaların son boyutu olan zihin okumanın yordadığı değişken kendini suçlamadır.

#### *Sonuç ve Öneriler*

Ergenlerin yakınlıktan kaçınma boyutunda ortalamalarının düşük olduğu ancak gerçekçi olmayan ilişki beklentisi ve zihin okuma boyutlarında ortalamanın yüksek olduğu görülmektedir. Stresle baş etme stratejilerine bakıldığında ise ergenlerin sosyal destek arama ve problem çözme stratejilerini öncelikle kullandıkları tespit edilmiştir. Kadınlar ve erkekler arasındaki anlamlı bir farklılık olup olmama durumuna göre ilişkilerle ilgili bilişsel çarpıtmalar ve stresle baş etme stratejilerine bakıldığında ise, kadınların sosyal destek arama ortalamaları erkeklere göre daha yüksek bulunurken erkeklerin kendini suçlama boyutunda ortalama puanları daha yüksek olduğu görülmüştür. İlişkilerle ilgili bilişsel çarpıtmalar boyutunda ise gerçekçi olmayan ilişki beklentisi boyutunda erkekler kadınlara göre daha yüksek ortalama puana sahiptirler. Bu sonuçlar erkeklerin kadınlara göre bilişsel çarpıtmalarının daha yüksek olduğunu ve baş etme stratejilerinde de etkisiz yöntemleri kullandıkları sonucuna götürmektedir. Path analizinden elde edilen

sonuçlara bakıldığında ise, yakınlıktan kaçınmanın en güçlü yordayıcısı stresle baş etme stratejilerinden kaçınmadır. Elde edilen bu sonuç, yakın ilişkiler kurmaktan kaçınan bir kişinin stresle baş etme stratejisi olarak kaçınmayı kullanması beklenen bir sonuç olarak görülürken, ergenlerin gerçekçi olmayan ilişki beklentisini yordayan stresle baş etme stratejisinin sosyal destek arama olması araştırmanın beklenen bir sonucu olarak görülmemektedir. Zihin okumanın yordadığı değişken kendini suçlama ise beklenen bir sonuç olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Literatürde bazı araştırmacılara göre bireylerin kullandığı baş etme stratejilerinde bir tutarlılık bulunmamaktadır. Stresli durumun özelliğine ve yapısına göre stresle baş etmek için seçilen stratejiler ve onların etkililiği ve ilişkili olduğu değişkenler farklılık göstermektedir. Bu çalışma sonucunda elde edilen bulgular ergenlerle ilgili eğitim programları hazırlanmasına ve stresle baş etmede daha etkili stratejileri kullanmalarına ilişkilerle ilgili bilişsel çarpıtmalarının ise az olmasına yardımcı olarak, onların yaşantılarındaki stresi azaltacağına inanılmaktadır.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* İlişkilerle ilgili bilişsel çarpıtmalar, ergen stresi, baş etme stratejileri, geç ergenler.